



Leadership Emergence Through Volunteerism: A Case Study of Late Adolescent Exemplars

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What we already know

- 1 in 4 teenagers engage in volunteer activities (VCLA, 2015)
- Positive outcomes:
 - Identity development (Pancer et al., 2007)
 - Academic outcomes (Johnson et al., 1998)
 - Positive attitudes towards civic engagement (Janzen et al., 2010)



My interest in adolescent volunteerism



Leadership

“Leadership is a relational process combining ability (knowledge, skills, and talents) with authority (voice, influence, and decision- making power) to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organizations, and communities” (MacNeil, 2006, p. 29).

Methods

- Case Study
- 5 youth exemplars
 - Recruited through HOBY
- Semi-structured Interview via Skype (30 - 45 minutes long)
 - Based on the Life Story Protocol (McAdams, 2008)
- Content Analysis
 - In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016)
 - Pattern Coding (Saldaña, 2016) and Directed Content Analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)

Participants

- **Chad:** Organized a 5k walk/run event \$4,000 for Parkinson's disease research
- **Elisabeth:** Raised over \$3,000 and packed over 12,000 meals for an organization called Feeding Children Everywhere.
- **Danny:** Organized a school wide educational campaign to raise issues about domestic violence and abuse. Raised over \$8,000 for the local domestic abuse shelter

Participants

- **Omar:** Started his own non-profit organization at 15 years old. Collects unwanted bags from conferences and donates them to charities to send to Africa and other developing countries
- **Taylor:** Daughter of a same-sex couple in the Southern United States. Started a blog to document discrimination her family received. Signed an Amicus brief sent to the Supreme Court and spoke at a rally while the Justices deliberated the case of marriage equality.

Research Questions

- What characteristics do emerging adolescent leaders possess?
- What resources do adolescents report utilizing in their journey toward leadership emergence?
- How do emerging adolescent leaders report experiencing obstacles while engaging in social change work?

Results/Discussion - Themes

Characteristics

- Involvement
- Passion
- Confidence
- Skills
- Ownership
- Mentoring others

Resources

- Mentors
- Positive Networks

Obstacles

- Overcoming Obstacles

Results/Discussion

- Passion
 - “I realized like people just don't have the same opportunities as others. I can eat all the organic vegetables I want but someone a few streets down will be like eating canned food and boxed food and processed food... it just bothered me that everyone didn't have the same equal opportunity to eat like properly or nutritiously.” - Elisabeth

Results/Discussion

- Positive Networks
 - “One of the biggest parts was the network of people that you meet, like extremely outgoing, like extremely happy, people who are just great leaders and people that you know you can rely on and talk to... [it] really gives you a sense of community... There are people that are actually dedicating their lives um to doing great, and once you feel like you belong to that community, you're more reinforced to stay in that community, continue doing what you're doing” – Omar

Results/Discussion

- Ownership
 - “And by the end of the project I realized that this was something that I started and I needed to take ownership for it and this is not the adults' project this is my project and I need to stop asking for permission and just do and take ownership of that” – Danny

Results/Discussion

- Overcoming Obstacles
 - “they made all these promises about how I could help with the shows and stuff but then they said, ‘well, I'm sorry we can't have a 13 year old volunteering for us’ or whatever. Then I ended up starting another campaign.”
 - “I figured that there was something I could do, even though they didn't give it to me, I just wasn't going to sit around and watch. I just wanted to do something.” – Omar

Implications

- Leadership education that uses the volunteerism as part of its curriculum needs to encourage young people to be *creators* of social change rather than just *participants*.
 - Focus on passions
 - Develop confidence
 - Create positive networks
 - Promote ownership
 - Encourage them to persist through obstacles